

**Annual Focus Kickoff: “My Church”**

**Focus Passage:** *Matthew 16:13–20*

**Other Passages Referenced:** *Matthew 5:13a; Acts 4:32; Romans 12:10b; 13:8; 15:14; Galatians 5:22–23; 6:2; Ephesians 3:20; 5:25–30; Philippians 2:3; 1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 2:9;*

**Sermon Recap**

The words, “my church” in Matthew 16:18 indicate that the Church belongs to Jesus. When we say, “my church” we are referring to the local church with which we associate ourselves. When Jesus says, “my church” he is talking about his possession of the entire Church, everyone who has put his/her faith in Jesus as God’s promised Messiah-King. Jesus bought his Church back from slavery to sin and death at the price of his own blood. Therefore, we must define *church* in whatever way Jesus and his word describe it.

If the church is whatever Jesus meant when he said the word, “*church*,” we need understand what he meant. While the first-century *ekklesia* originally referred to a gathering of citizens, the New Testament moves away from the language of the state and begins using the language of family relationships. Christians are **called out from their communities to gather**, and **then they are called out from the gathering back into the community**. There is a weekly rhythm of gathering as an assembly of Christ-followers and then scattering back into our communities. The big idea throughout our annual focus is that “Jesus’ Church is Jesus’ family on Jesus’ mission.”

The advances of technologies that allow people to customize music, video, news, and other inputs according to their individual preferences potentially bleeds over into individuals wanting to create their own playlist church that aligns with their individual preferences for music, preaching, style, time, etc. Jesus’ Church is his family on his mission. The challenge is to participate fully in all that Jesus calls us out from and all that he sends us into. We do not have the option of picking and choosing just the parts or the people to which we are most drawn. Jesus is the only one who can truly say “my church.” We are part of his Church and since we belong to Jesus, we do not have the option to pick and choose our personalized elements of Church. The pastor used the illustration of a clearance-priced box of items for a low price, but the catch was the buyer had to take the entire box and could not pick the things she found most desirable. As member of Jesus’ family on Jesus’ mission, we need to “take everything in the box.”

Throughout church history, including the reformation, Cyprian’s quote “He who does not have the Church for his mother cannot have God for his Father. Where are we in the Church? We are surrounded by that which belongs to Jesus, those whom he bought with his crucifixion and resurrection. We are part of a called-out gathering. We are united into Jesus’ family.

**Interpretation Helps**

- *Ekklesia*, which often gets translated by the English word *church*, means “to call out and gather.” In the first century, this referred to a group of citizens called out from their homes to gather and conduct vital community business before returning to their towns. Being called out from the world to gather and being called out from the gathering back into the world, is at the heart of the dynamic tension of what Jesus meant when he first said, “my church.”

- Caesarea Philippi – “City about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee, at the base of Mount Hermon and near the source of the Jordan River.”<sup>1</sup> It was a Gentile city outside of Israel and was a center of worship for the Greek god Pan. It is worth noting that Matthew first recorded recognition of Jesus as Messiah occurred in a Gentile area.

### Group Gathering

**Group Check-in** — Care, Celebration, Encouragement (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. Informal conversation to allow individuals to catch up with one another.
2. Ask if anyone would share how they’ve been hearing and obeying God’s direction.

**Allow the Word to Speak** — Be Hearers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

**READ Matthew 16:13–20**

1. What from the passage or sermon was most impactful to you?
2. Were you left with any questions or confusion about the passage or sermon?
3. What were some of the public’s incorrect assumptions as to who Jesus was? (Matt 16:13–14)
4. Upon what truth did Jesus declare that He would build His Church? (Matt 16:16–18)
5. In the phrase, “... the gates of hell shall not prevail against” the church, who is on the attack and how is that significant?

**Put the Word into Practice** — Be Doers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. How do you see yourself fitting into the rhythms of the Church gathering from the world to be sent back into the world?
2. In your own life, do you see any tendencies toward a *playlist Church*—picking and choosing elements according to your individual preferences? If yes, how so?
3. How do you see yourself relating to other members of the church as family?
4. How do you see yourself participating in Jesus’ mission?
5. If you have not yet recognized Jesus as your Redeemer and King, what is keeping you from taking that step of faith?

**The Big Question:** What do you sense God's Spirit saying to you and what concrete action will you take in response? Share your answer with the group or another trusted Christian and ask them to pray for you.

**SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES:** Click [here](#) for some good opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> John D. Barry et al., [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Mt 16:13.



**Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.**



**In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.**

***Ephesians 5:25-30***



**Gk. Ekklesia: called out gathering**



**But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood,  
a holy nation, God's own people, that you may  
declare the wonderful deeds of him who called  
you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**

***1 Peter 2:9 (RSV)***

**“You are the salt of the earth...” *Matthew 5:13a***



**“The church is meant to be both a safe environment for protecting the community, and a group willing to lay down their lives for the vision of God’s Kingdom come to earth.”**

***Tod Bolsinger***  
***Canoeing the Mountains***



## **The Ekklesia—more than a gathering...**

- **Brothers and sisters (*Rom. 16:14*)**
- **Children of God (*Eph. 3:20*)**
- **The household of God (*1 Tim. 3:15*)**



**Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit,  
but in humility count others as more  
significant than yourselves (*Phi. 2:3*)**

**Outdo one another  
in showing honor (*Rom. 12:10b*)**

**Bear one another's burdens,  
and so fulfill the law of Christ (*Gal. 6:2*)**



**Let no debt remain outstanding,  
except the continuing debt  
to love one another (*Rom. 13:8*)**

**Welcome one another  
as Christ has welcomed you (*Rom. 15:7*)**

**The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,  
patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness  
gentleness and self control (*Gal. 5:22-23*)**



**Now the full number of those who believed  
were of one heart and soul,  
and no one said that any of the things  
that belonged to him was his own, but  
they had everything in common (*Act. 4:32*)**



## **Where are you at church? — *Matt. 16:18***

- **Surrounded by that which belongs to Jesus**
- **Part of a called out gathering**
- **United in a family**



**“He who does not have the church for his mother cannot have God for his Father.”**

***Cyprian of Carthage***



**“My Church” = Jesus’ family  
on Jesus’ mission**